



Navigate the River of Your Ideas



Let it Flow

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- ♣ To be a successful writer you have to engage your reader. Think of your writing as a river: a flow of thoughts and ideas that the reader must navigate. Obviously, you want the reader to experience smooth sailing. If the prose river gets too choppy, the reader might turn back, and then you have lost.
 - ♣ In effective writing, transitions smooth the waters for your reader, moving the reader logically from one thought to another. They hold the writing together, linking ideas within a sentence, sentences within a paragraph, paragraphs within an essay. Below are nine transitional techniques you can use to increase the effectiveness of your writing.
1. **Pronouns**—simple transitional devices that refer to a person, place, or thing mentioned earlier in a sentence or in a previous sentence. For instance, “**The car** had seen better days. **It** sat there, a sad, sorry hunk of metal.” “It” references back to “the car,” linking the two sentences.
 2. **Question-Answer**—asks a question at the end of one paragraph and answers the question at the beginning of the next paragraph. For example, you might end a paragraph with, “What precisely caused this decline in readers’ attention span?” The beginning of the next paragraph might then be: “Experts cite several reasons for this decline.” While this device is effective in leading your readers to the next idea, it should be used sparingly.
 3. **Whole-Part**—refers to something as a whole in one sentence, and as a part in the next. For instance, “Our **biology class** took a field trip last week. **One student**, Marsha, tripped over a cord and we had to rush her to the hospital.” In this example, “biology class” operates as the whole, of which “one student” is a part.
 4. **Parallelism**—offers balance to a sentence or paragraph. Consider, “We came, we saw, we conquered,” and “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” These phrases are memorable because they flow: the repetitive structure leads the reader effortlessly from one idea to the next.
 5. **Punctuation**—often overlooked, the semi colon is a transitional device that signals a close link between two related complete sentences. For example, “It was raining outside; I feared I would be drenched by the time I reached my car.”
 6. **Sequence**—for readily moving between paragraphs, consider the way the details are organized. If, for instance, you are writing about the reasons video games are good for children, discuss reason one in one paragraph. In the next paragraph, discuss reason two, and so on. Because the paragraphs discuss various reasons for a single subject, they are related by that subject. You can also organize by chronology or space.
 7. **Repetition**—repeat a key word or phrase from the preceding sentence or paragraph to demonstrate the connectedness of the ideas. For example, “The success of American Graffiti encouraged Georg Lucas to **pitch** his idea for a science fiction movie called Star Wars. His **pitch** paid off: 20th Century Fox backed the project to the tune of \$8.5 million.” In this example, the word “pitch” is repeated and links the two sentences together. As in the question-answer technique, repetition should be used sparingly or you will create monotony that will lull the reader into a deep sleep.
 8. **Synonyms**—to avoid repeating a word or phrase exactly, use a synonym to refer to a key word or idea in the preceding sentence or paragraph. In the example shown above, for instance, you might write, “His **presentation** paid off: 20th Century Fox backed the project to the tune of \$8.5 million.” Because “presentation” is a synonym for “pitch,” the ideas in the sentences are still linked, but you do not have to worry that the reader will object to your using the same word in consecutive sentences.
 9. **Words or Phrases**—You can use words or phrases to express different relationships between thoughts and ideas. Use them to indicate:
 - a. **Comparison**: and, as well as, furthermore, likewise, moreover, similarly, too
 - b. **Contrast**: although, but, conversely, even so, however, on the other hand, unlike, yet
 - c. **Sequence or time**: after, before, currently, during, earlier, later, previously, then
 - d. **Place**: above, below, here, in the foreground, nearby, opposite, to the right, under
 - e. **Cause and effect**: accordingly, as a result, because, due to, hence, since, therefore, thus
 - f. **Emphasis**: certainly, clearly, especially, evidently, moreover, obviously, of course, truly
 - g. **Summary**: finally, in brief, in conclusion, in other words, in sum, to summarize
 - h. **Examples**: an illustration, for example, for instance, like, as such, that is, to illustrate
 - i. **Qualification or concession**: for the most part, granted, mainly, of course, to be sure